



**the detea**

the department of economic  
development, tourism and  
environmental affairs  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **EMPOWERING THE NATION THROUGH ITS YOUTH**

**30 JULY 2014**

**Bloemfontein:** It was all smiles and happiness on the faces of 22 Nature Conservation learners and their families from Qwaqwa when they finally completed their learnership and awarded certificates on the 25 July 2014 at Tshiya Education Resource Centre. This learnership programme to the value of 1.5 million came from a partnership between Department of Economic Development, Tourism, Environmental Affairs and Small Business Development; Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, Sport, Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) and SANParks.

High rate of unemployment and shortage of skills amongst youth is a serious concern to government, hence the emphasis on learnership programmes. Learnerships are an important part of government initiative in addressing skills shortage in the country. Based on this initiative, departments are expected to implement learnerships in terms of the National Skills Development Strategy III (2011/12 – 2015/16).

The learnership programmes also form part of departmental commitment towards the Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy. With their implementation, challenge of youth unemployment will be addressed as young people will be provided with skills to better their chances of employment, therefore eradicating poverty.

The learners started the Nature Conservation Resource Management Terrestrial course with theoretical training at the South African Wildlife College (SAWC) in Mpumalanga for a period of 5 months and continued with workplace experiential training at Golden Gate National Highlands Park (GGNHP) for another 5 months.

When congratulating the graduates, MEC Mosebenzi Zwane urged them to use the knowledge they have received to attract more tourists to the Free State. He went further to indicate that the Free State is doing well in terms of attracting travelers to the province hence the increase of the international arrivals from 6.5% to 9.6%, moving Free State from position number 8 to 5 out of 9 provinces. "Government has given you tools to uplift your families and communities and it is up to you how you use what you have learned to be helpful to others", explained MEC Zwane. He strongly discouraged arrogance amongst youth and encouraged them to use the knowledge gained positively.

Sabata Moji, talking on behalf of the learners said that they are very grateful for the opportunity given to them by government, especially because they are the first group in the Free State to benefit from this programme. He went further to say that today they have this qualification which they did not pay a cent for, instead we were getting paid. He further explained that to have qualifications in the field of conservation will open doors for them as

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young people and also change the perception that black people are not into conservation. He urged his fellow graduates to not stop here but to be hungry for knowledge and continue to further their studies as education will only change their lives for better.

The proceedings ended on a very positive note when Sipho Claasen from CATHSSETA made an undertaking to talk to the organisation to look at the possibility of finding employment or internship for the recently graduated learners.

End!!!

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Department of Economic Development, Tourism, Environmental Affairs and Small Business Development**

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